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ABSTRACT

This guide is designed to assist employed parents in preparing themselves and their children for a successful child care experience. Chapter 1 covers child care selection, including resources available to aid in selection, characteristics of quality care, comparative shopping, and changing child care programs. Chapter 2 provides tips for preparing oneself for the required paperwork and forms, child care routines, and the provider-parent relationship. Chapter 3 deals with preparing one's child for entering child care, with specific guidelines for children of different ages. Chapter 4 instructs parents on clothing and other items for children at child care which can help the day run smoothly. Chapter 5 provides guidelines for staying healthy at home, reducing the spread of infection in child care settings, and identifying potential health problems common in child care settings. Chapter 6 examines ways to prepare on a daily basis for getting to child care, school, and work on time, including preparing the night before, having organized storage areas for outdoor clothing, and making a checklist of items needed for child care. Chapters 7 and 8 present guidelines for dealing with the daily separation and reuniting of parents and children to better enable them to cope with their feelings. The guide concludes with a list of resources for additional information and a child care success checklist. (Contains two references.) (DR)

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FOR YOUR KIDS AND YOU

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A Guide and Organizer for Working Parents

by the
Preschool Enrichment Team, Inc.
with
Elizabeth M. Austin, Ed.D.
Patricia L. Wise, R.N., M.Ed.

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Table of Contents

Introduction 1

The Child Care Quest 3
- What Are Your Choices? 3
- Who Is Out There To Help You? 5
- What is Quality Child Care? 6
- Comparative Shopping 8
- What About Special Needs? 12
- Making a Change? 13

Preparing Yourself 17
- The Paper Chase 17
- The Child Care Routines 19
- Your Provider and You 21

Preparing Your Child 25
- Smoothing the Way 25
- Infants 27
- Toddlers 29
- Preschoolers 30
- School Agers 32

Dressing Your Child for Success 33
- The Right Clothes 33
- P.S. Other Stuff You Need 37

Staying Healthy 39
- Stay Healthy at Home 39
- Stay Healthy at Child Care 42
- Be Prepared for Health Problems 46

Managing Mornings 51
- The Night Before 51
- Shortcuts 52
- Be Easy on Yourself 53

The "Goodbye Blues" 55
- Expect Some Tears 55
- Good-bye Techniques 57
- Your Feelings Count, Too 59

THE "HELLO BLUES".....61
Expect the Unexpected 61
The Same Old Routine.....63
So, How Was Your Day? 64

CONCLUSION 65
Where to Get Additional Information 65
Child Care Checklist.....67
References 69

INTRODUCTION

This book is for working parents. As a guide, it can help you make your child's experience in a child care program easier and more successful. It offers ways to make life better for your child and you when you are apart.

Finding good child care and helping your child adjust can feel overwhelming. To help, this book is divided into separate categories and serves as a handy reference. You may also use it to organize information about your own child care situation. Whether your child is in a center-based program, a family-based program, an after-school program, or cared for by a friend or relative, this book has relevant information for you.

Approximately 20 million children and their parents leave home each morning with hard hats, briefcases, lunch boxes and "blankies" in hand. They say goodbye, have busy times, and say hello at the end of the day. This book is designed to help your child have the most successful experiences in between those goodbyes and hellos.

You can read these sidebars for a quick summary of this book.

We know you don't have much time to spare.

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Please Note: *When writing about children, we have handled the tricky issue of gender pronouns in this manual by alternating references to girls and boys by chapter. In this way parents may feel that the material is relevant to their own circumstances, regardless of the sex of their child.*

When referring to child care providers, we retain female pronouns throughout the book. This is done to minimize confusion. While acknowledging the preponderance of women in the field, we in no way want to discount the role of men. Men who care for children play an important role in changing stereotypes and providing role models in the lives of young children.

We use the following age ranges to group children into different categories:

Infant–0 to 15 months
Toddler–15 mo. to 2 years, 9 mo.
Preschooler–2 years, 9 mo. to 5 years
School-Age Child–5 to 12 years

The Child Care Quest

Finding a quality program takes time and energy, but it is the most important step toward a successful child care experience for your child and you.

It is helpful to plan ahead. Often you will encounter a waiting period before an opening becomes available for your child. If you are expecting a baby, you might want to begin your research before the baby is born.

Give yourself time to:
- *make phone calls*
- *visit programs*
- *interview providers*
- *check references*
- *make a decision.*

What Are Your Choices?

Child care centers provide full- or part-time care for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, or school-age children. Individual centers serve one or more of these groups, and children are usually grouped by age. Centers are open all day, usually on a year round basis. Some centers provide evening and overnight care, but they are few and far between. State agencies license centers and require them to meet minimum health and safety, program, and staffing requirements.

Child care centers:
- *designed for working parents*
- *year-round schedule*
- *children grouped by age.*

Family child care homes offer full- or part-time care for children of all ages. Children are cared for in the provider's home. Some providers offer evening, overnight, weekend and emergency care. In many states family child care homes must meet some state regulations includ-

Family child care:
- *in provider's home*
- *small group size*
- *flexible schedule*
- *mixed ages.*

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Nursery schools:
- *part-time only*
- *usually for three- to five- year-olds*
- *follow school calendar.*

In-home child care:
- *in your home*
- *expensive*
- *difficult to find*
- *convenient.*

School-age child care:
- *before and after school*
- *variety of settings.*

ing limits on the number of children in care.

Nursery schools offer part day or part week programs for preschoolers. They are generally open only during the school year and follow the school calendar. State regulations are usually the same for nursery schools as they are for child care centers.

In-home child care is provided in your home by someone you have employed. It is usually the most expensive form of care and often the most difficult to find. Some parents, however, feel it is the ideal solution, especially for infants or when you have more than one child. Usually at-home care is not licensed by the state. You may find an at-home provider by placing an advertisement in a local newspaper, through word of mouth, or through an au-pair or nanny placement agency.

School-age programs offer child care services before and after school to children ages 5 through 12 in a variety of settings. These settings include child care centers, elementary schools, community centers, family child care homes, parks and playgrounds.

Who Is Out There To Help You?

In many parts of the country, *Child Care Resource and Referral agencies (CCRRs)* can give you extensive information on the cost, location, openings, hours and other specifics of licensed programs in your area.

For information about Child Care Resource & Referral in your community, call the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRA) at (202) 393-5501.

Your *employer* may offer child care benefits. Check with your personnel department to see if your employer has a contract with a local CCRR to help you in your child care search.

If you do not have a CCRR in your community, try calling the state licensing agency for children's services. Also check the yellow pages under the heading "child care"; local newspapers; and community bulletin boards at churches/synagogues, public schools and libraries.

Remember to spread the word among neighbors, friends, your health care providers, co-workers and anyone else you feel might be helpful to you in your search. Word of mouth is a good way to circulate information.

Your local Child Care Resource and Referral agency will help you find a program for your child.

Some employers have contracts with CCRRs to help you in your search.

Word of mouth is a great way to find child care.

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Quality child care programs have some common characteristics.

What is Quality Child Care?

Every family probably would define the term 'quality child care' somewhat differently. For a parent of an active, robust four-year-old, 'quality' might mean a program that has lots of outdoor space and equipment, as well as tolerance for fast moving tricycles! A mother of a shy three-year-old might find 'quality' in a soft-spoken, relaxed teacher who exudes warmth and acceptance. 'Quality' is a term that is hard to pin down but there are some universal characteristics of good, sound child care programs. In quality child care programs, you will find the following:

- An environment that is attractive and safe; not too tidy, not too cluttered.
- Interesting and varied materials and equipment that are accessible to the children.
- Happy children who are moving about, busily engaged in a variety of activities.
- Teachers who are responsive and sensitive to the children's needs and who provide constant supervision.
- Activities that offer lots of social interaction and are intellectually as well as physically challenging.
- Discipline techniques that help children learn appropriate behavior while showing respect and caring.
- Plenty of time for children to make choices and create their own play.
- A balance of active and quiet times and places.

You are also most likely to find quality in programs where:

- The teachers are college educated and trained in child development.
- The environment is attractive and nurturing to the children and teachers.
- The adult-child ratios are as close as possible to those developed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and presented in the following chart.

Age	Adult:Child Ratio	Max Group Size
birth-12 mos	1:3	6
13-24 mos	1:3	6
25-30 mos	1:4	8
31-35 mos	1:5	10
3-year-olds	1:7	14
4-year-olds	1:8	16
5-year-olds	1:8	16
6-8-year-olds	1:10	20
9-12 year-olds	1:12	24

The National Child Care Staffing Study reports that the education of child care staff is an essential determinant of quality child care.

Does the group size seem right for your child?

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Quality caregivers will welcome your questions and understand your concerns.

The enclosed check list is a handy guide for asking questions and preparing for your visit.

Comparative Shopping

Initial phone calls are helpful in weeding out providers who are unable to meet your needs. Asking questions in the beginning may spare you time-consuming visits to programs that will not work for you.

Make Contact...Gather Basic Information

When making initial calls, first describe:

- age of your child(ren),
- hours and days you need care,
- and when you need care to start.

Find out about the program hours and understand the fees. Some questions might include:

- Would you please describe your program?
- What is a typical day's schedule?
- Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and your staff?

You may also have some issues that are particularly important to you and you will want to ask about these before checking out the program further. These issues might include religious affiliation of the program, television viewing, outdoor play, types of food served, etc.

So Far, So Good—Make a Visit

If you feel comfortable with your initial phone conversation, set up a time to visit the program when it is in session. Always leave your phone number in case the

provider needs to re-schedule.

Visit more than one program if you can and then compare the pros and cons using the checklist at the back of this book. Also a quick unannounced visit such as to drop off forms may give you a better sense of how the program routinely operates.

Get to Know the Provider

The person who is taking care of your child should have an understanding of child development and be someone you trust. Make sure that you meet and observe all the adults who will be interacting with your child.

You will want your child to have as stable a child care experience as possible. Find out how long the provider has been in business or ask about staff turnover.

As you observe the provider, notice if she treats children with respect. Does she comfort them when they need it? Perhaps most importantly, does she seem to love children and enjoy her work?

Ask About Parent Involvement

A good child care program welcomes parent visits, suggestions, concerns and participation. Don't be shy! The more involved you feel, the happier both your child and you will be. Questions to consider include:

- Will you have a chance to speak with the provider when you drop off and pick up your child?

Always visit a program when the children are there. Save questions for later discussions with the provider.

Make sure you are welcome to visit anytime.

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Other parents can provide important insights to add to your own observations.

When checking references, listen to what is said and what is left unsaid. Silence and hesitation can speak volumes.

- How will you find out about day-to-day activities?
- Are you welcome to visit, without calling, anytime your child is there? (The answer must be yes.)

Check References

Calling references is an important way to get more information. You would be well advised to pass by any provider who cannot or will not give you names of other parents. Ask for the names of two to four parents who are using or who have used the provider in the past. Friends and neighbors may be able to vouch for the person's character but cannot tell you much about the actual care.

Suggested questions to ask references include the following:

- How long have you known the provider and in what capacity?
- What are the program's strengths and weaknesses?
- Was there staff turnover and if so how was it handled?
- How old was your child when you used this provider? How did your child feel about her?
- What were the reasons you stopped care?
- How was discipline handled?
- Describe the caregiver's maturity, reliability, and ability to handle emergencies.
- Would you use this provider again if you needed care?

Take the Plunge—Trust Yourself

Ultimately trust your heart when making the final decision. After all the questions, observations, and references, if you have doubts about a situation, do not use it. *You know your child best. In the end, your parenting instincts are your best guide.*

When all is said and done, trust your gut feelings when making your decision.

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The American Disabilities Act assures that children with special needs will be considered for admission into child care programs.

What about Special Needs?

If your child has a special need such as a language delay, a developmental problem, or a physical disability, you will want to add a few more items to your checklist before you make your child care choice.

One consideration is whether or not you want your child in a program that integrates children with special needs, or in a program designed to care solely for children with disabilities. Your decision may be based in part on what is available in the community, how specialized your child's care may be, and what you think will work best for your child and you.

Many children with special needs are included in regular child care programs. Children with disabilities benefit by joining a group where they may observe and perhaps imitate the behavior of others and thus learn from them. Children without disabilities also benefit by developing acceptance of, and friendships with children who are different from themselves.

When you talk with potential caregivers, be sure to explain your child's special requirements. Look for a program where the staff is committed to meeting the social, emotional, intellectual and physical needs of your child and all of the other children, as well. And, ideally, if you can, look for a provider who has had training in caring for children with special needs.

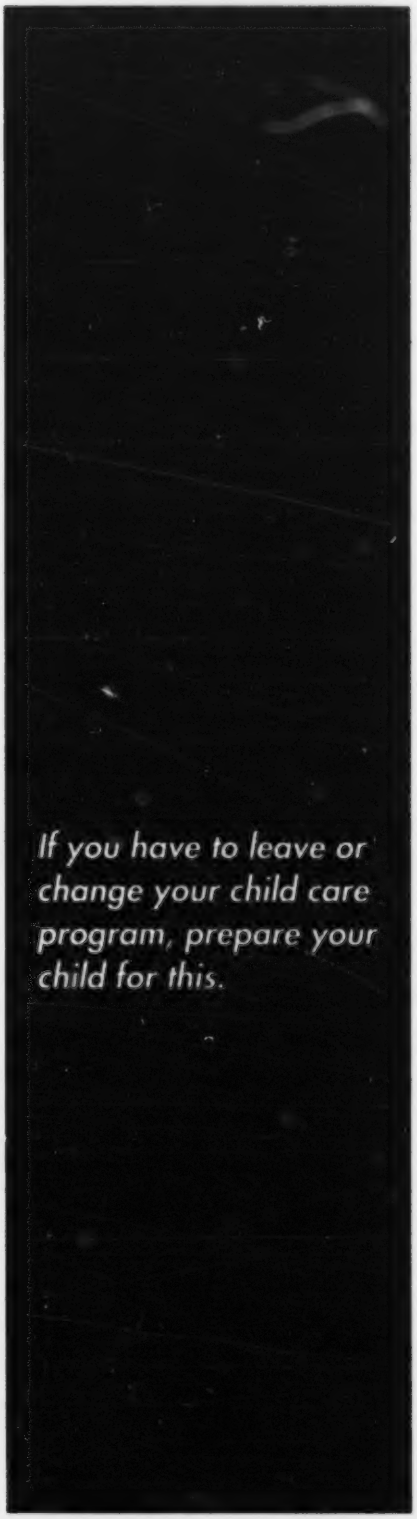
Making a Change?

For a variety of reasons, it is sometimes necessary to change from one child care program to another. It is common, for example, for infants and toddlers to attend smaller, more flexible family child care programs, and then move on to larger child care centers when they get older. It also may happen that your family will move, the children in a group will change, teachers will leave or problems may occur that prompt you to make a change.

Tips for Leaving

When children leave child care, they need some preparation ahead of time. Telling your preschooler a couple of weeks before the change occurs is beneficial and gives your child time to prepare emotionally. Making a photo book of the child care program to take with you can help make the departure easier. It is also helpful to make a return visit after a few months so your child can see that everyone in the old program is O.K. Sometimes children worry that something may have happened to the people they have left.

Older infants and toddlers have a more difficult time understanding what is happening. It can be helpful to make a gradual transition to a new program so the infant/toddler can start becoming attached to a new provider as she is easing out of the old situation. If your infant/toddler has made a strong attachment to



If you have to leave or change your child care program, prepare your child for this.

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the teachers and children, take photos of them to look at later. It is not advisable to tell the infant/toddler that the old child care program is 'all gone' because this can make them anxious about future situations and people vanishing, too.

Does the Program Fit?

You may find that despite careful research and observation the program you chose is not a good fit with your child. As hard as it may be to admit that there are problems and that you need to re-open the search, it is essential that both your child and you are happy with your child care program.

Make a change if the program is not working for your child or you.

Deciding whether a program is a good fit is sometimes difficult, especially if this is your first experience using child care. Having a few doubts and feeling separation sadness are normal responses for your child and you. Some children will have a difficult time saying good-bye for a long time. After one or two months, however, your child should be settled into the program for most of the day.

If there are dramatic changes in your child's behavior for an extended period of time, you may need to re-evaluate the program's suitability. Explain the situation to your provider and try to work together in coming up with solutions. Pop in unexpectedly or a few minutes early for pick-up, if you can. Observe your child without being seen. Does she seem engaged? Does her behavior at home and at child care match familiar patterns you

have noticed before? Or does this new experience seem to be shaking her confidence on a very deep level?

Some parents find that they need to re-evaluate choices that they have made in their work or personal lives. Others need to resume their search for the right child care program. One consolation is that looking for child care does get easier with practice. Once you find the right child care situation and a good balance between work and family needs, your whole family will benefit.

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PREPARING YOURSELF

Congratulations! You have selected a child care program which feels right for you and your family. Taking time now to organize yourself will streamline your entry into this new adventure.

The Paper Chase

Once you choose a child care provider, the "paper chase" will begin before your child enters the program. Licensed child care homes and centers require that you submit important documentation about your child. The program must also give you certain information about its services. Make sure you do the following:

Fill out the forms. You will receive necessary contracts, forms, and permission slips. Fill them out and return them promptly, so they can be reviewed before your child begins. Read the contract carefully so that later there are no surprises in hours of operation, days off, fees, etc.

Read the parent handbook and/or any other written information given to you. Ask questions about anything that is unclear. These documents give you important details about your child care situation. Share this written information with all adults who regularly drop off or pick up your child.

Do the paper work promptly.

Read all the materials given to you.

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Make sure your child is up to date on health exams and immunizations.

Use the storage pockets in this manual to organize and safely store the many papers you will receive from your child care provider,

Make medical appointments for your child's physical exam and immunizations, if these have not already been completed. Make arrangements for the proper medical reports to be sent to your child care provider or directly to you.

Organize your papers. Decide where to keep child care papers and information. This information may include program policies, fee schedule for vacations and absences, calendar of holidays and vacations, a class list, and regular notices about events throughout the year. This manual has storage pockets for this purpose. Being able to easily lay your hands on these papers will make life that much easier when you need the information.

The Child Care Routines

All child care situations have routines for getting young children through the day successfully. Routines make your child feel secure in the unfolding of the day. It is important that you and your child understand these routines, so that you can support the valuable work that your provider is doing. If the routines are not clear to you be sure to ask for clarification. Consider the following questions:

Knowing the child care routines will help your child and you adjust more easily.

Arrival and Departure

- Where should you park your car and how long can you leave it there?
- Are you responsible for locking the gate each time you arrive and depart?
- What door do you use to enter the home or center?
- Do you sign in and out?
- Who supervises arrival routines such as hanging up coats or hand washing? The provider or you?
- Is there a special place or routine for saying good-bye in the morning and pick-up at the end of the day? Is there a window where your child can wave good-bye?
- When do naps, snacks, and meals occur? These may be difficult times for drop-off and pick-up.

Keep safety and security procedures in mind.

Your Child's Belongings

- Where do you store your child's belongings?
- Where can you leave your car seat for

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Learn where to store your child's things.

Find out what is expected of parents.

pick-up at the end of the day?
- What do you do with your child's lunch?
- If you need to bring any special materials or equipment, such as diapers, bibs, bottles, smocks, port-a-crib, or medicine, where are they stored?
- What is the policy on toys from home? Where do they belong?

Parent Responsibilities/Involvement

- Is there a parent advisory board and/or regular parent meetings?
- Do you have regular chores such as laundry, cleaning, or weekend work days?
- How are payments made? Do you leave checks in a special place?
- Is there a message or bulletin board that parents should check regularly?

Your Provider and You

When your child care provider and you are working in partnership, everyone, including your child, feels happier and more secure. The key to building a positive relationship with your provider is acknowledging that she has a difficult and demanding job.

Child care providers, get few, if any, breaks during the day. Many eat their meals with the children and get no time by themselves until the children go home. Despite constant and urgent demands from children, they need to be consistently patient and understanding.

In addition, although parents feel the financial burden of child care, providers are generally paid less than half the average wage earned by female workers in America. In many instances they are not paid for time to plan activities, gather materials, do paper work, shop for supplies and food, and meet with families.

All this is not to make you feel guilty about the work your child care provider does but to help foster mutual appreciation and friendship. As you prepare yourself for this new child care experience, think of ways you can cultivate your relationship with this new person in your child's life.

Acknowledge the positive. Notice something the teacher has done that you like and let her know! Tell her you appreciate the kind words she uses, the activities

Having a strong, trusting relationship with your child care provider is for the good of your child.

Understand the demanding job your provider has.

Early childhood teachers earn less than parking attendants.

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she creates, and the caring she gives.

Be prompt. It is easier on your child to arrive and leave on time.

Arrive and depart on time. Arriving promptly for drop-off and pick-up is the most frequent request programs make of parents. Arrange your schedule so you can be on time, and definitely call ahead if you are going to be late arriving or departing. Secure a reliable back-up person to pick up your child if your job frequently keeps you later than you expect. Remember to leave written permission with your provider authorizing who is allowed to pick up your child.

Talking immediately to teachers about problems and concerns is best for everyone.

Approach problems respectfully and directly. If you have a concern about your child's care, let the provider know right away. It is best to talk in person. The provider may not be able to have a long discussion when you bring up the topic, but the two of you should be able to schedule some uninterrupted time to discuss the issue fully. Here are some ways to phrase a problem:

- "I've been thinking about __.Can we talk for a few minutes?"
- "Is there something I can do to help with the __ situation? It seems to be difficult for (child's name)."
- "It is hard for me to bring this up, but I need to talk to you about __."

Any problem involving a child's behavior should not be discussed in front of the children.

Share information with your child care teacher. Be sure to let her know of changes in your child's life, such as a

visitor from out of town, Dad or Mom going on a trip, a relative dying, or a pet being injured. Changes affect children's behavior. Your provider needs to know what is happening in your child's life in order to effectively respond to your child's needs.

It is also helpful to tell your provider about the fun things happening in your child's life. A trip to the beach, a visit to grandma's, or seeing a circus parade provide fun stories to bridge the gap between child care and home.

Bring things to share. If you find a special book the children might enjoy, offer to lend it to your child's teacher for a few days. Music and story tapes can be easily shared, too. If you make a discovery on a walk, such as a nest that fell out of a tree or a beautiful stone, see if the teacher would like to show it to the children. If you bake, make some extra for a treat!

Show your appreciation. Show your provider that you appreciate the important role she plays in your life and the life of your child. (It need not be fancy - a verbal thank-you, a note, or a homemade treat go a long way!) Communicating your feelings and listening to hers will help build a lasting partnership which will benefit your child.

Keep your provider informed about events in your child's life.

Bring fun things to share:

- *shells from the beach*
- *books or tapes*
- *homemade treats*

Let your child's teacher know that you appreciate her.

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Preparing Your Child

It is an important step when a child enters child care for the first time or when he changes from one provider to another. Some children come into the world able to handle change and transitions easily. Others have a more difficult time. While your child's personality will determine part of the ease of the transition, you can help smooth the way.

Smoothing the Way

Find out your provider's policy regarding your child's entry. Many providers have a gradual entry plan where the parent stays a few hours for the first day or two. Other providers require that the parent stay all day for the first day. If the program you are considering does not welcome parents during the transition process, you may want to consider another child care program.

Keep in mind that it takes a lot of emotional energy for children to get used to new surroundings, new friends, new adults, and new routines. Even children who make transitions easily may seem subdued, clingy, or anxious. Try to keep the rest of your child's life as unaltered as possible during the transition to child care. And try to spend as much free time together as you can. If your child

Young children need their parents with them to make a secure transition into child care.

Adjusting to a new situation takes lots of emotional energy.

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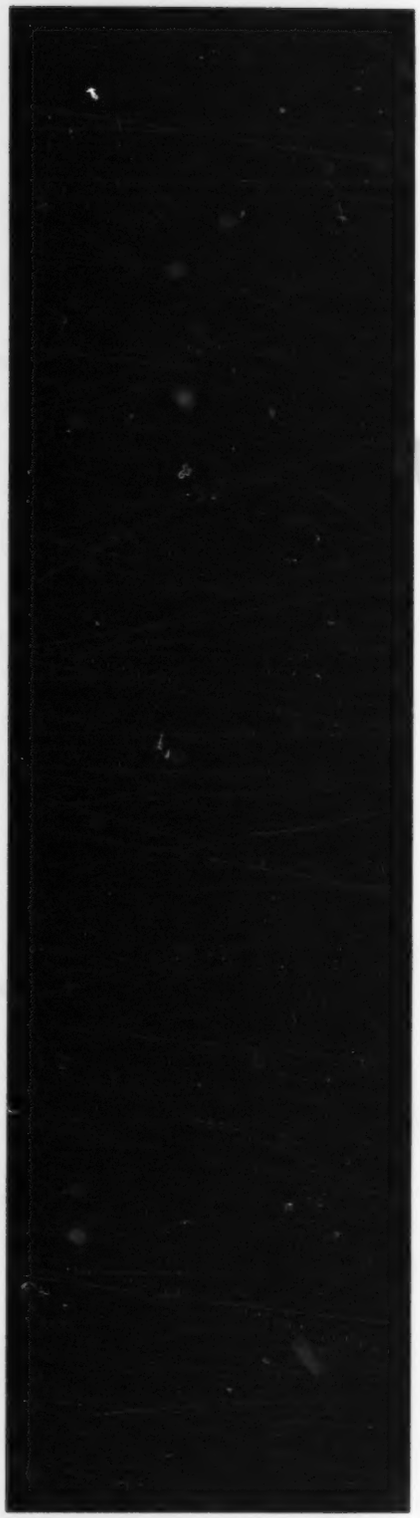

senses your constant support, the adjustment will be a much easier one for all of you.

Infants

An infant under six months will usually make an easy transition to a new setting which you have determined to be a warm, nurturing, safe, and healthy environment. At home, play peek-a-boo with your baby in preparation for separation. Reappearing time after time from behind a diaper or your hands will go a long way toward teaching your baby that you will be back.

Infants under 6 months usually adjust easily.

Nursing mothers may find it easier to have child care close to their workplace. This allows nursing visits during the day. Being able to visit your baby during the day also helps ease the transition from being home full-time to leaving your baby in someone else's care.

It is best if you introduce your infant to the new environment yourself. Feed your baby in the new place, try out the changing table, and show him some of the new toys. Let your baby associate this new place with you. Then make the first few days short ones, leaving him only a few hours at a time if you can. When you feel comfortable, you can begin your regular schedule.

Feed, change, and play with your baby in the new setting.

By seven to nine months, infants have become deeply attached to their parents and separating may be difficult. For older infants, it is a good idea to have a couple of visits together in the new setting before regular attendance begins. This allows your child and you to explore the toys

Older Infants 7-15 months may find separation difficult.

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Routines provide security.

and spaces together.

Try to be consistent about arrivals and departures. Your baby is beginning to be aware of routine. Regular patterns provide security. In the morning stay close to him for several minutes in the new space. This will give him the security needed to make the separation.

Toddlers

As with older infants, have a couple of trial runs with your toddler in a new child care setting before leaving him. In a sense, you are giving your blessing to the program and you are allowing your child to become familiar with the teacher, the other children, and the toys while you are there for security. After a couple of one to two hour visits, decide when you will leave and stick to your plan.

Toddlers are notorious for crying when their parent leaves, but it does not mean they will have a sad day. They usually stop crying right away. You can always call later and check with your provider to see how your child is doing. Do not sneak away in hopes of avoiding tearful good-byes. This will only undermine your child's trust in you and create a feeling of insecurity.

Consistency is extremely important for older infants and toddlers. Talk at home about the provider and the other children so that your child knows what to expect. Be sure to send in a favorite cuddly or blanket to help bridge the gap between home and child care. Talk to your child about your good-bye routine and stick to it. He will feel much more secure with a predictable pattern.

Stay with your toddler for 1 or 2 visits before leaving him in a new program.

Toddlers frequently cry when saying good-bye.

Never sneak away. Always say good-bye.

Send a favorite cuddly or blanket to help your child feel secure.

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Preschoolers can be prepared with visits, photos, and books.

Endless questions about the new program can be a sign of excitement or anxiety.

Use a calendar to count down the days until preschool begins.

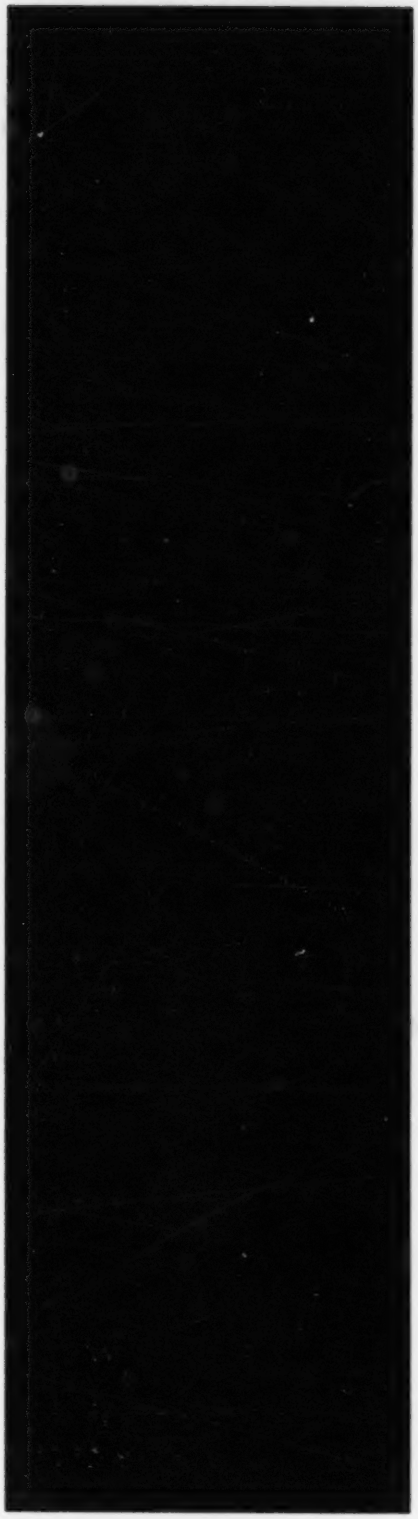
Preschoolers

Preschoolers need support from their parents as they adjust to a new child care setting. Parent and child should visit once or twice before beginning the program, and a parent should be available to stay at least several hours on the first day or two. Books about children going to child care or new schools and telling your child stories about making new friends can be fun and helpful. He will probably also be fascinated hearing about your experiences as a child. Driving by and looking at the child care home or center, taking photos of it, and photos of his new teachers can also make the upcoming experience more realistic for him.

Because the passage of time is difficult for preschoolers to understand, some are afraid the new child care situation will creep up on them unexpectedly. Endless questions about the new program can be a sign of excitement or anxiety. One thing that can help is a calendar that allows your child to count down the days before he begins in the new setting. A couple of weeks before beginning the new program make a chain with loops of paper, one for each day, and let your child tear off a loop each day. This makes the passage of time very visible and understandable.

Be careful not to create too much focus on the new child care situation. You want to give your child specific information so he will have realistic expectations, but you do not want to overwhelm him or

create anxiety. Give him concrete information about what will happen in the new program, read some books, then sit back and let your child take the lead regarding focus on the topic.



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With school-age children, tour the site together.

Introduce your child to his teacher.

School Agers

Children five to eight years old usually need a parent to accompany them to their school-age program, introduce them to the staff and look around the room with them. How long the parent needs to stay to help the child adjust may vary greatly. Children over eight years old generally don't need or want their parents to stay, especially if they attend a program with friends.

Dressing Your Child for Success

Two of the ways you can make the day run smoothly for your child is to send her to child care 'dressed for success' and well 'equipped.' She will need clothing that is easy to manage for bathrooming, diapering, or changing, as well as clothing that is durable and comfortable for playing. She will also need a few items to help her day run smoothly.

The Right Clothes

Dress for Dirt

Children need to explore, experiment, and be up to their elbows in activities in order to learn. If your child comes home with dirt on her clothes, you know she has been involved, and involvement means that she has been learning!

There are countless ways that your child will get dirty at child care. When outdoors, children spend much of their time sitting or kneeling on the ground. The legs and seats of their pants get very dirty. They splatter mud and paint all over themselves and readily wipe dirty hands across their shirts. Help your child enjoy these wonderful experiences of childhood by dressing her in clothes that neither you nor she will care about if they become dirty.

Mark each item of clothing with your child's name...even socks and underwear!

You can help your child by sending her to child care in easily laundered, durable clothing that can withstand the dirty results of active play.

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Shoes are a critical safety issue. The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia recently studied 3,000 children brought to the emergency room. Over 1,000 cases were related to loss of footing. Untied shoes were responsible over 67% of the time.

Infants and toddlers need roomy clothes with snaps at the crotch.

Preschoolers need elastic waists, no cuffs, and sleeves that push up.

Dress for Safe, Comfortable Feet

Your child's safety depends on shoes with non-skid soles. Low-top sneakers are often best. Velcro closures prevent accidents from untied laces and allow your child to be an independent dresser. Sandals may be problematic during outdoor play. Be sure that your child's shoes fit properly. Shoes that are too small or too big can cause falls.

Find out if there are specific footwear needs in your child care program. Some programs want slippers or slip-on shoes for indoor wear.

Dress for Ease

Young children need to be able to master their environment. They feel good when they can do things independently. Certain clothing will make your child feel competent and make life easier for your provider.

For infants and toddlers, roomy, one-piece outfits with snaps in the crotch are a must for easy diaper changing. Avoid clothing that gets caught up in crawling or climbing activities. Active toddlers also need shoes that stay on and that are not easy for them to take off at the wrong times.

With appropriate clothes, preschoolers can enjoy a great deal of independence. Try to avoid clothing that is difficult to get on and off. Elasticized waists that can be easily pulled up and down work best. Avoid snaps, zippers, and belts. Although

overalls are cute, doing and undoing the straps several times a day takes extra time that can make the difference between successful toileting and an accident.

Avoid cuffs on pants. Cuffs were invented by sand and mud as a means of transportation! Straight pants legs or elastic at the ankles work best for this age.

Sleeves that can be pushed up easily for frequent hand washing and water play will make life easier for your child. Long sleeved shirts that button at the wrist are very difficult for young children to manage.

Dress for Winter

In the winter, your child can have wonderful experiences with snow and ice when she is dressed appropriately. Getting a group of children bundled up for the outdoors is often a comical nightmare for teachers, but you can help by providing the following:

A plain, inexpensive, durable, one-piece snowsuit, made of nylon or other repellent material is best. A dark or brightly colored one will conceal stains. The pant legs should be long enough to cover the boot tops but not drag on the ground. It should have a snug fitting hood with room to wear a hat underneath for extra warmth.

Two pairs of water repellent mittens are often needed if your child will be playing outside in both the mornings and after-

Used clothing stores may have reasonably priced snow clothes for children.

A durable snowsuit, mittens, and boots are essential.

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noons during snow season. Look for mittens that keep the snow out and insulate well. Most toddlers and some preschoolers need to have their mittens attached to their sleeves to prevent loss.

For cold weather, a good pair of boots is worth the investment. Oftentimes boots with rubber lowers, leather uppers, and removable felt liners are best for comfort, warmth, and durability. Second best are tall, waterproof boots with good tread, that can be closed tightly and worn with heavy socks.

Dress for the Sun

Because of changes in our Earth's atmosphere, we now need to take special precautions when children are outdoors in sunny weather. With the ozone layer becoming thinner, we are all exposed to more ultraviolet light which causes sunburn and skin cancer.

To protect your child, apply sunscreen every morning before she gets dressed. Check on your provider's sunscreen policy, and, if possible, ask her to re-apply it later in the day. Use a sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher. Some health care professionals recommend a sunscreen without PABA for very young children. Lip balms with sunscreen are also important. In addition, send light clothes and a hat with a broad brim to wear outdoors.

Protect your child with sunscreen, lip balm, sun hat.

P.S. Other Stuff You Need

Tote Bag

Designate a tote bag to be your child care bag. It needs to be large enough to hold a lunch box, snowsuit, diapers, boots, security objects, extra clothes, and more. It needs to be small enough to store or hang in the designated place at child care. Older children may want to bring their own bag or backpack and help carry the many things which must be transported from home to child care and back again.

Full Change of Clothes

Some providers want parents to keep a full change of clothes for their child in the tote bag; others store them in individual containers on the premises. It is essential to provide extra underwear and socks.

Make sure that a full change of clean clothes is available at child care.

Workable Lunch Box

If you provide your child's lunch or snack, a good lunch box is necessary. The ideal lunch box is one that a preschool child can open but one that does not mistakenly come undone and spill its contents on the floor. It should be easily stacked in the refrigerator with several other lunch boxes on top of it. Reusable containers for sandwiches and finger foods eliminate the need for plastic or paper wrappers. Make sure the lunch box can be easily washed. They get very messy!

Make sure the lunch-box is easy to wash and label it with your child's name.

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Learn about naptime. What should you bring for your child?

Understand what toys your child may bring from home and talk about it with your child.

Beverage Container

Find out if your child's lunch will be refrigerated. This will determine what type of beverage container you will need to provide. There are both insulated and non-insulated containers with pop-up dispensers from which children drink directly. Be sure the container is easy to wash because pop-up straws, not cleaned properly, are a perfect breeding ground for bacteria. Also check for leaks by filling the container with water and turning it upside down.

Naptime Things

Child care programs handle naptime in a variety of ways, providing different amounts of equipment. Many caregivers provide a mat, cot, or crib and sheet. You may want to bring in a lightweight blanket, a security object, or stuffed animal. Find out what your laundering responsibilities are and whether or not you can leave naptime things overnight.

Toys From Home

Programs vary in their policies about toys brought from home. Problems sometimes arise when children have difficulty sharing their toys or when the toys get lost or broken. On the other hand, your child may need to bring something as a security object. Discuss this ahead of time with your provider. Books, audio tapes, stuffed animals, or baby dolls are just some of the items that may be acceptable.

Staying Healthy

It's a fact. Children's hands get dirty. They put their hands in their mouths. They wipe their noses on their shirts. They sneeze on each other and do other delightful things that all of us did when we were little! There is no stopping such behaviors for they are part of childhood. But, working together, child care providers and parents can help children stay healthy and reduce the spread of infection.

Stay Healthy At Home

Wash Hands!!

Believe it or not, washing hands is the most effective way to prevent the spread of infection. Teach all members of your family to wash hands frequently, using liquid soap. Wash immediately when you arrive home from work, school, or child care. Wash after toileting and before eating. Wash after blowing your nose. Teach your child to wash his own hands as soon as he is able.

Sneeze Down

This may sound funny, but it is recommended that we teach children to sneeze and cough toward the floor or toward their armpit rather than covering their mouths with their hands. Covering your mouth puts germs directly on your

Children are little germ factories.

Wash Hands!!!
Everyone's!!!
Often!!!

Don't cover your mouth!
(But don't tell your mother we said so.)

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hands and requires hand washing after every cough or sneeze. Sneezing down is easier and more sanitary.

Balance your child's diet over one week's time.

Eat Well

Don't worry too much if your child focuses on only one or two food groups at each meal. The aim is a balanced diet over a week's time. Healthy diets include several servings of fruits and vegetables each day, starches such as bread, pasta and rice, some protein such as meat or eggs, and a limited amount of fat and sweets.

Write medical appointments on your work schedule to avoid unforeseen double booking.

Get Physicals and Immunizations

Physicals are recommended yearly for children from ages two to five, and much more frequently for younger children. Your child should be up to date on all immunizations. Dental and vision exams should begin by the time your child is three years old.

Reduce stress with rest and recreation.

Get Enough Rest

This is easier said than done in our fast-paced lives! It is important to remember that during sleep our bodies rejuvenate and heal. Without enough sleep we are more susceptible to infection. Establish a regular bedtime routine with your chid to ensure getting to bed on time. Institute a family quiet/nap time on weekend afternoons or try for an earlier than normal bedtime one night a week.

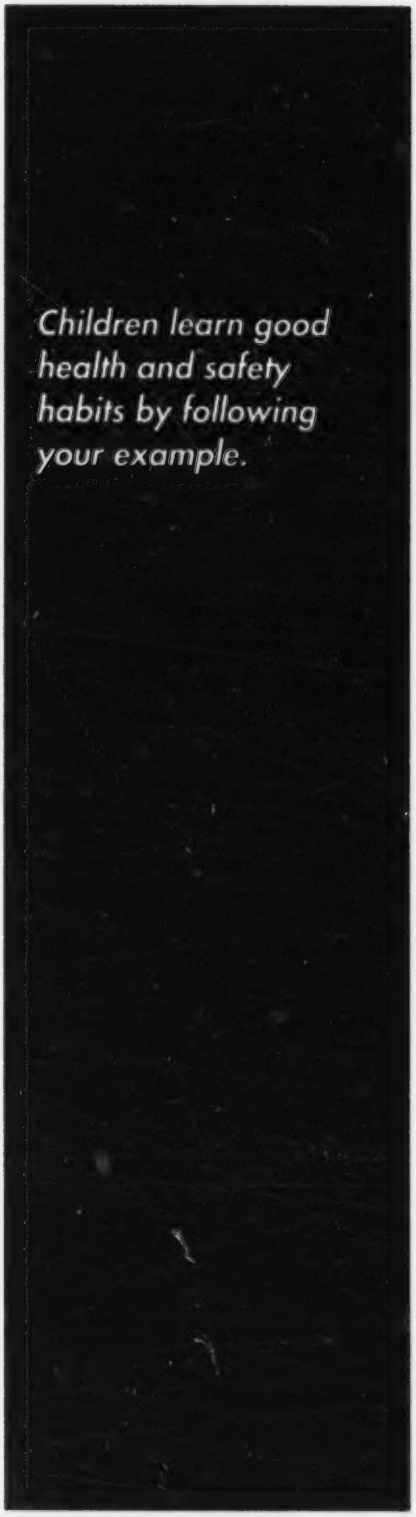
Get Enough Hugs!

Stress definitely affects our health. Fami-

lies need time for relaxation, affection, togetherness and fun. Make sure you have some time each week for activities that heal the soul, and you will help your bodies at the same time.

Teach Health and Safety

Engage your child in his own health and safety. Teach good habits. Never travel without his and your seat belts buckled. Infants and toddlers must always ride in safety seats. Teach, by example, that smoking is not O.K. Do not subject him to second hand smoke.



Children learn good health and safety habits by following your example.

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Use pockets in this book to store your child care health policies

Give your child care provider as much health information as possible.

Stay Healthy At Child Care

Read the Health Care Policies

Child care centers and many family child care homes have written health policies. There is a place in this manual to keep those health policies handy. They will help you understand when you should keep your child home due to illness, how to deal with medications, what to expect if another child in the program gets a contagious illness, emergency procedures, and much more.

Provide Complete Health Records

Your child care and health care providers are partners with you. It is important to give your child care provider as much health information as possible. Include your child's development and health history, vision/hearing/developmental screenings and results, addresses and phone numbers of your child's regular health and dental caregivers, records of immunizations, and a copy of a recent medical exam. These records are confidential and are not to be shared without your permission.

Explain Any Special Health Needs

Be very sure to let your child care provider know of any food, medication or insect bite allergies, or any other special health needs your child may have. Write on the health record what to do, how your child best responds, and who to

contact. In some cases the provider will need to know what symptoms to look for in deciding when to transport your child to the hospital.

Provide Healthy and Safe Lunches

If you send a lunch with your child, it should ideally be stored in a refrigerator in order to keep it fresh and safe. Peanut butter, fruit, vegetables, yogurt, cottage cheese, string cheese and bread are wholesome foods your child may enjoy. If the lunch is not refrigerated, be careful not to send food that may spoil such as meat, dairy or egg products. Do not send vitamins or other medications in the lunch box.

Choking is a major safety concern for young children. Cut hotdogs and carrots into strips. Avoid popcorn, peanuts, and grapes.

Provide Sanitary Milk or Formula

Nursing mothers can express milk (under sanitary conditions) and take it to child care, clearly labeled. Breast milk must be stored in the refrigerator and can be safely kept there for up to 48 hours. Frozen breast milk will keep for two weeks. It is a good idea to freeze several extra feedings at your baby's child care for unexpected hungry days!

Once breast milk or formula is warmed and used, leftovers should be discarded.

If you are using formula, follow the manufacturer's guidelines for refrigeration. Formula mixed at home and transported without refrigeration to child care runs the risk of bacterial growth and is not suggested.

When Medication is Necessary

If it is necessary to send medicine, make

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Label all medications. Prescriptions must be in original containers with clear directions.

Know what diapering supplies to bring from home, and clearly label them with your child's name.

certain the medication is in the original bottle with the child's name, dosage, and physician's instructions for administering. Your provider may also require that you fill out a permission slip for administering the medication when you bring it in. Medication should be stored in the refrigerator or out of children's reach at child care. Make sure you remember to take it home at night. A brightly colored ribbon on your child's lunch box or tote bag may provide a helpful reminder that medication needs to be transported.

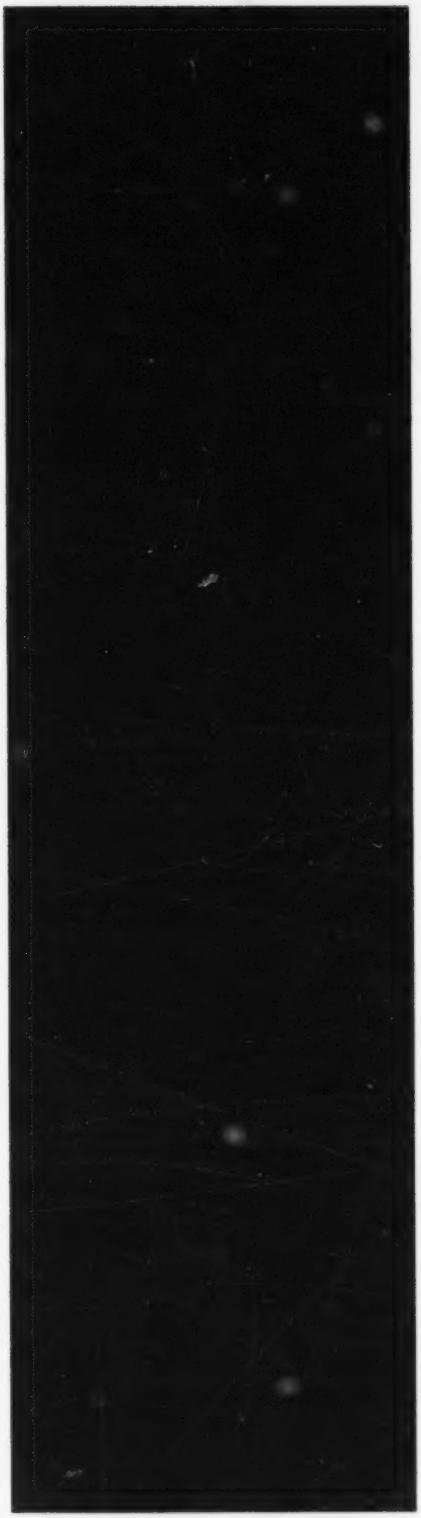
Be Familiar With the Diapering Procedures

Some child care providers supply diapers and others will ask you to bring your own. If you are bringing your own, keep track of the supply so they do not run out.

Disposable diapers are recommended as the most sanitary type of diaper for child care. Some parents, however, may prefer the reusable cloth "diaper system." This system includes a removable cloth diaper inside a waterproof cover. In child care, the "system" must be removed as a unit and both parts laundered before reuse. Parents must remember to send plenty of diapers and diaper covers to accommodate the need for a new "system" at each diaper change. Soiled items will be placed in plastic bags and sent home for laundering. Many providers appreciate donations of plastic bags!

Along with plenty of diapers and covers, send extra clothes with your child. Wear-

ing clothes over the disposable diaper or the diaper system prevents spread of contamination. Clearly label your child's diapering supplies.



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Some illness and injury are normal!

Soon your child will develop increased immunity to others' diseases.

Children need to take risks!

Develop techniques with your provider to minimize biting, such as decreasing frustration, offering other objects to bite, and encouraging the use of words.

Be Prepared for Health Problems

Expect Some Illness and Injury

Some illness and injury are to be expected as children grow and develop. Most children get at least four or five colds a year. Your child may get one or two more when he starts child care due to the new exposure to more adults and children. Don't worry. Soon your child will develop increased immunity to the various diseases and will have no more illness than children who are not in child care.

Some falls and scrapes are inevitable in the lives of young children. Studies have shown that children in child care experience the same number or fewer injuries than children cared for at home. Injuries that do occur in child care are usually minor, such as scrapes and bruises to the head, face, forehead, and arms. Children need to take risks to grow and develop and to test their new skills. With good supervision, this risk taking will help your child develop.

Understand Biting

Biting does occur between children. Toddlers are the main culprits. If your child bites or is bitten, understand that toddlers are developing language, working on independence, and have been exploring the world with their mouths during infancy. Biting is more likely to occur during times of high activity or transitions to new situations, and children out-

grow it fairly quickly. Share any concerns about biting with your child care provider.

Know What To Do When Your Child Is Sick

Children often get sick early in their child care experience while they are still adjusting to new germs. Be assured it will happen, probably before you are ready. Many illnesses are mild enough for your child to go to child care. But some are not.

Make alternative care arrangements for those days your child cannot go to child care and you must go to work. This care should be with someone your child knows and loves. Sometimes you will want to stay home with your child. Your employer's policies on taking sick days may allow you to use some of your sick leave to care for your sick child.

Understand Ear Infections

Ear infections are not contagious. Children need not stay home unless they are in pain. Ear infections are common in young children and often get started during a cold. Most young children have at least one ear infection before they are two. Children in child care have more due to increased exposure to colds.

Studies show that children who lie on their backs and drink bottles have a higher incidence of middle ear infections. Do not give your child a bottle to take to bed.

Have a back-up plan for when your child is sick. It is bound to happen!

Make sure your child feels comfortable with any alternate arrangement.

Ear infections are common and not contagious.

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Make an unexpected visit to your child care program. Communicate any concerns.

Nice people get lice, but lice will not go away without treatment.

If your child is under two or if you are pregnant or nursing, consult your health care practitioner before treating lice.

If your child has recurring ear infections, ask your health care provider about different treatment options. Also check your local library or bookstore for a number of books written for parents about ear infections.

Know About Child Abuse

Abuse rarely happens in child care. The best protection for your child is an open door policy. Make sure that you are welcome to stop in at any time, and DO. Quality child care providers want communication with parents and are interested in discussing any concerns you have. If you have concerns about the health and safety of your child, call your local child care licensing agency.

Learn About Lice

Head lice are tiny insects that live in hair, especially on the back of the neck, behind the ears, and on top of the head. Lice hatch from small eggs called nits which are attached to the individual hairs near the scalp.

While it is unpleasant to think about lice in your child's hair, it is important to remember that it is not a reflection on the cleanliness of your family or your child care situation. Children get lice from one another through normal play activities. It is highly contagious and physically irritating if left untreated.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that lice be treated with a shampoo containing pyrethrin. You

should keep your child home until 24 hours after treatment to ensure that he is no longer contagious. If your child contracts lice be sure to notify your child care provider so that other parents can be on the lookout.

MANAGING MORNINGS

It is no small miracle that a family can get up, get dressed, eat breakfast, fix lunches, gather hard hats, work tools, briefcases, business papers, jackets, and sports equipment, and get to child care, school, and work on time. Each family finds its own rhythm in coping with the many tasks.

The Night Before

Some parents like to do as much as possible the night before. Here are some tasks to consider:

- Empty and re-stock the tote bag. Have a check list of items needed in the bag so you will know immediately what needs replenishing. Remember diapers, diaper covers, bottles, security objects, clothing, shoes, etc.
- Empty and clean lunch boxes;
- Select and lay out clothes. Children who have difficulty getting dressed in the morning may want to sleep in soft sweat clothes which they can wear to child care in the morning.

Involve the children in getting things together for the next day.

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Shortcuts

Have storage for outdoor clothing accessible for your child.

Organized storage areas for children that allow them to take responsibility for their clothes, toys, etc. Low hooks for coats, baskets for mittens and hats, and rubber mats for boots will help your child get ready faster in the morning. Making sure that your child gets in the habit of using them is worth frequent reminders in the beginning.

Make a check list of things you need for child care.

Make a large picture poster or some other check list that can be read with or by your child in the morning. It might include: lunch box, snowsuit, hat, mittens, boots, tote bag, blanket, and stuffed animal. Go over the list together before you leave. Having all of her belongings helps your child have a successful day.

Simplify breakfast and make it fun.

Do not get bogged down in breakfast menus that take a lot of preparation time. Toast and peanut butter with a glass of milk or juice is a nutritious breakfast. Cereal, fruit with cheese and crackers, or a cup of yogurt and some toast are well-balanced meals, too. Find anything that your child likes that is low in sugar and includes whole grains, milk products, and protein. Add some fruit and you are all set!

Be Easy on Yourself

Being a working parent is highly demanding. While your children are young, you may need to reduce some other demands in your life. For example, community service, outside interests, and helping others may need to be postponed until your children are older.

Be sure to take care of yourself. Try to fit in at least a few minutes of exercise each day. A little is better than none, and exercise is a great way to reduce tension. You and your children may also engage in regular exercise together. Taking a walk, riding bikes, or throwing a ball will give you valuable family time while providing exercise.

You need pampering, too. If you are too stressed it will affect your happiness and the quality of your parenting. Take some time for yourself and keep reminding yourself that children do grow up.

Being a working parent is highly demanding and often requires sacrifice. Taking care of yourself is an important part of parenting.

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The "Goodbye Blues"

Saying good-bye at child care can be hard for everyone. Shifting gears as you start a busy day requires a letting go of the comforts of home and family, no matter how exciting the day promises to be.

Expect Some Tears

Older Infants

By seven to nine months infants are very attached to their parents and may cry when they leave. This may be especially hard for parents who are experiencing "separation anxiety" for the first time. Provide continuity between home and child care by leaving familiar items with your infant. A favorite blanket or toy will provide a familiar sight, texture, and even smell that will help your infant learn that this new place is an extension of home.

Toddlers

Toddlers frequently cry when their parents depart. The transition is often difficult, but it does not mean they will be unhappy all day. Letting your provider know what will distract your child from his tears is the best help. Some toddlers prefer a favorite, familiar toy. Others are comforted by a cracker or drink of juice.

If your child has a security object, it helps support his independence. To him, the security object is an extension of you, and offers similar feelings of safety and comfort.

A security object and an engaging activity help toddlers get settled.

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Acknowledge your preschooler's feelings and let him know when you will return.

Your toddler's security object, a favorite blanket, stuffed animal, or photo of you, should always accompany him to child care. It should be available whenever he is in distress.

Preschoolers

Preschoolers may also cry when their parents leave. A security object can help them make the transition more easily. Your preschooler is also old enough to appreciate having his feelings acknowledged, with such statements as, "It is hard to say good-bye. It feels sad." Also, let your child know when you will return. "I'll be back after nap" (or outdoor play) is far easier to understand than "I'll be back at 3:00."

Taking some concrete action may help him move on and become involved in the day's activities. Try suggesting that your child draw a picture or "write" a letter for you to see at the end of the day. It may be just the thing to get him started.

Good-bye Techniques

The Same Old Routine

Develop a morning good-bye ritual and be sure to allow time to do it everyday. Your departure routine should be compatible with your provider's needs and might include the following:

- Upon arrival help child take off outdoor wraps;
- Put belongings away together;
- Assist with hand washing;
- Help him get involved with a favorite toy or ask the teacher to help;
- Get the appointed number of hugs and kisses;
- Tell your child when you are coming back;
- Leave promptly.
- Wave good-bye while your child waves from the window.

Do not leave without saying good-bye. Even though your child might cry, it is better for him to express sadness than to suddenly realize you are gone and be surprised, disillusioned, and angry. Sneaking away can damage your child's trust in you.

Send Photos of You

Research shows that young children are better able to relate to the materials and adults in a new situation if they have a photo of their parent(s) with them. The photo works best if it is of the face only,

Going through the same good-bye routine each day helps your child feel secure.

Always say good-bye to each other. Never sneak away!

Give your child a photo-to-go.

Making friends helps children adjust.

Learning names helps make friends.

big enough to easily recognize. Have your photo laminated or cover it on both sides with clear contact paper. It can be carried around, attached to your child's clothing, or put on a wall at a low height.

Help Your Child Make Friends

When your child feels connected to other children in the program, it is easier for him to let go of you. Teaching your child some time-tested ways to make friends can be very helpful. Here are some tips:

- Teach your child to use the other children's names when approaching them to play. When a child makes an overture it is much more effective to say a specific name,than it is to address the group as a whole. For example, "Jack, can I play with you?" works better than "Can I play?"
- Teach your child to find out what the other children are playing. He can ask them what they are doing and then ask, "What can I do? What can I be?"
- Tell your child that if he finds something interesting to do and invites others to join him they probably will want to play.
- Show your preschooler the fun of leading and following in play. Taking turns and sharing ideas are very important in successful play experiences. Practice leading and following games at home. "Let's do your idea, then let's do mine." This can be a rewarding and fun interaction between some children and parents.

Your Feelings Count, Too

It is perfectly normal for you to feel sad when leaving your child in the care of another adult. Yet, it can be too much of a burden to your child if you share your feelings of sadness or ambivalence. When your child says, "I'll miss you, Mommy!" the helpful response is, "I'll be thinking about you, too! We can be together and have fun tonight!" After you leave you can pull out your tissues and have a good cry whenever you need to.

Allow yourself to feel sad, acknowledge those feelings as normal, but do not wallow in guilt. A positive attitude toward your work and toward your child's care will help. Tell yourself that you are a good parent doing the best you can. You either have to work or you want to have a career.

Take things to work that will make you feel connected to your child, such as photos, trinkets, or pictures he has made. Think about the fun times you have with your child and think ahead to the times you will be together. And if your child rarely enters your mind while you are at work, that's fine too!

Parent-child attachments are very deep and letting go can be difficult for parents, too.

What makes you a good parent is how caring you are when you are with your child, not how guilty you feel when you are away.

THE "HELLO BLUES"

Surprisingly, your child may not always run happily to your waiting arms when you return to the child care program. One would think that children, especially those who have some separation sadness in the morning, would be delighted to see their parents and eager to go home. But this is not always true. Transitions at any time are difficult for some children.

Some children find transitions easy. Others find them difficult, whether it is letting go in the morning or re-uniting in the evening.

Expect the Unexpected

Your child may feel frustrated because your arrival is unpredictable and not under her control. She may not like to be surprised. She may be involved in something else. And she may feel just a bit angry at having been left in the first place. Over time, helping your child put these feelings into words may reduce difficult behaviors.

Children are often tired and emotionally drained after their busy day. Sometimes your child may fall apart when you arrive, crying at any little problem. She may physically lose control and stumble, fall, or bump into things. Or she may get very silly and want to show off.

Patience, a sense of humor, and a predictable pick-up routine are the best remedies for the "hello blues."

It is not uncommon for children to try to control the reunion by initially ignoring their parent or by running and hiding. Your child may be overtly angry at being interrupted and tell you to go away. On

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the other hand, she may be ready to go and leave without difficulty. All of these behaviors are normal.

The Same Old Routine

It is helpful to establish a predictable pick-up routine. If pick-up time is difficult, discuss a routine with the provider. Generally, it is best to give your child a few minutes to finish what she is doing, but a long drawn out departure is not advisable. Here are some pick-up suggestions:

- Go to your child once you arrive;
- Help her think of a way to end her play;
- Give her a few minutes while you collect her belongings;
- Leave promptly;
- Have a drink of juice or a cracker in the car to keep her energy going.

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Your child may not want to talk much about her day right away.

Children tell you things in their own ways at unexpected times.

So, How Was Your Day?

When you get home, you may want to have some "down time" together with a book or game before launching into dinner time routines. Having a "come home" chair is one idea. When you arrive home you can sit with children gathered around until they have had enough "refueling."

Your child may not talk much about her day. Be careful not to ask too many questions. Right now she may just want to be with you. Listen carefully. Stories about child care will crop up at other times, often when you least expect them.

CONCLUSION

Congratulations for all you have done to help your child while you are at work! It is not an easy job to find quality child care, manage transitions, organize belongings and get out to work each day. We hope this book has been useful and that it will continue to be a resource. We encourage you to adapt the information to the particular needs of your family. Each family is different and will meet its 'work and family' challenges in its own unique way. Don't forget to take some time for yourself, too. Your well-being is crucial to the well-being of your children.

We hope this book has been helpful to you.

Where To Get Additional Information

In charting your course of action, you may need help along the way. The following local and national organizations provide additional information as you travel this ever-changing journey with your child.

Here are some additional resources.

Child Care

- **National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies**
  1319 F Street NW, Suite 606
  Washington, DC 20004
  (202) 393-5501
  (information about CCRR in your community)

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- **State child care licensing agency**
  listed under state government in phone book *(information about licensing regulations in child care settings; complaints)*

- **Local United Way/First Call**
  listed in phone book
  (information about child care services and local human service agencies)

Health

- **State Department of Public Health**
  listed under state government in phone book *(health regulations, information about health concerns)*

- **American Academy of Pediatrics**
  141 N.W. Point Blvd
  P.O. Box 927
  Elk Grove Village, IL 60009-0927
  (800) 433-9016
  (health information relating to children and child care settings)

- **LaLeche League**
  contact local birthing organizations/hospitals *(information and support for nursing mothers returning to work)*

Child Development

- **National Association for the Education of Young Children**
  1509 16th Street, N.W.
  Washington, D.C. 20036-8777
  1-800-424-2460
  (publications on a wide range of parenting interests)

CHILD CARE SUCCESS CHECKLIST

This Child Care Checklist suggests some basic questions to ask each provider either on the phone or during your visit. This checklist will help you remember and compare each situation.

1. BASIC QUESTIONS	Provider #1	Provider #2	Provider #3
Is the location convenient for you to get to and from? Is there transportation available?			
Is there an opening in your child's age group? When will an opening be available? Is there a waiting list?			
Is the provider licensed? Licensed for how many children?			
Is the provider open during the hours you need child care? (Be sure to allow time for travel to and from the provider when deciding what hours you will need care.) If your schedule is unpredictable, is the provider flexible about drop-off/pick-up times?			
What is the provider's fee? What does it include (e.g. meals, diapers, transportation, admission fee, etc.)? Will you have to pay tuition for days when your child is out sick or on vacation?			
Does the provider offer any type of financial assistance for child care? A discount for 2 children?			
What is the yearly schedule, 9 months or year-round? Will the program be closed for vacation weeks, holidays, etc.? For family child care, is there a backup person available if the provider gets sick?			
If your child is sick, what is the policy? Is the provider set up to care for sick children?			
2. CAREGIVER QUALITIES			
I feel comfortable talking with her/him.			
I feel comfortable with the caregiver's beliefs on how children should be taught to care for themselves.			
I feel comfortable with the way that children's behavior is guided.			
S/he understands and enjoys children my child's age.			
S/he seems confident, relaxed and experienced.			
S/he has a personality my child and I would both enjoy.			
3. PROGRAM AND SPACE			
Is there enough room for my child to play freely indoors and outdoors?			
Is the space clean and safe?			
A. Infant or Toddler			
Are there clean and comfortable changing and sleeping spaces separate from cooking/eating areas?			

	Provider #1	Provider #2	Provider #3
Is the babies' play space warm, soft and comfortable for floor play? Will my child be able to mostly set his/her own schedule for rest and food?			
Are there interesting, safe things to handle and to look at? Are there spaces to crawl in and explore?			
B. Preschooler			
I feel comfortable with the type of activities planned for children (think about the amount of adult direction and the things your child likes to do).			
There is a daily schedule with opportunities for active and quiet play.			
The children and caregivers seem interested, busy and relaxed.			
It is clear where toys and materials are kept and children can get many things for themselves.			
There are a variety of materials such as books, blocks, puzzles, games and art materials.			
C. School-age Child			
I feel comfortable with the ages of children my child will play with.			
My child will be carefully supervised but will have freedom to choose safe activities and to relax after a day of school.			
There are interesting, fun and challenging activities planned for my child each day.			
4. GENERAL IMPRESSIONS			
I am comfortable with the program philosophy (e.g. multicultural, non-sexist, religious orientation).			
I can picture my child playing happily in this situation.			
There is a good balance of ages, boys and girls, personalities, and ethnic and cultural backgrounds in the group.			
Others have said positive things about this person or center.			

COMMENTS:

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REFERENCES

American Public Health Association and American Academy of Pediatrics, *Caring for Our Children—National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs.* Washington D.C. and Elk Grove Village, IL; 1992.

Bredenkamp, S., Ed., *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Young Children Birth Through Age 8.* Washington D.C.; National Association for the Educatin of Young Children, 1987.

The Preschool Enrichment Team, Inc., located in Springfield, Massachusetts, is a nonprofit early childhood training and consultation agency offering child care resource and referral services to parents and child care providers.